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# Democrats Denounce Reagan for Faulting Intelligence in Attack

## Aides Dispute CIA's 'Near-Destruction'

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Past and present CIA officials yesterday sharply disputed President Reagan's campaign claim on Wednesday that there was a "near-destruction of our intelligence capability" before he took office.

Aides to Reagan's CIA director, William J. Casey, said neither budget nor personnel levels were cut unduly during President Jimmy Carter's administration.

Cuts in the covert operations branch under Carter's CIA director, Adm. Stansfield Turner, briefly became an issue when agency old-timers and some others fought them. But officials said yesterday that the cuts were almost exclusively of headquarters bureaucrats and that none involved an operative or agent overseas.

A general decision to make some cuts in CIA personnel was made after the Vietnam war in 1976 and early 1977 when George Bush, Reagan's vice president, was CIA director, these officials said. This decision was executed and accelerated during the Carter administration.

But officials also said that Reagan had seen improvement over his 3½ years in office in the intelligence he receives, largely because of improvement in satellites and other

intelligence technology. In addition, one official said that morale has improved in the intelligence community under Reagan and efforts have been made to expand the so-called human intelligence or information obtained from spies.

"What he sees as president and knows about what is going on," this official said, "just makes him feel what we're doing now is much better."

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) said yesterday that this does not justify Reagan's statements because those technical improvements were set in motion in previous administrations, especially during the Carter years.

Moynihan, who is vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and several other intelligence experts yesterday questioned whether there have been improvements in intelligence gathered by humans. Senior Reagan administration officials still complain privately that that kind of intelligence is still not very good.

Noting that the president's comments about the purported intelligence failure were in response to a question about last week's terrorist bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut, Moynihan said, "Getting inside a terrorist group is the hardest thing this government can do. It can take years and years."

As further indication that the intelligence question is becoming a political issue, Moynihan and Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), chairman of the intelligence committee, yesterday introduced legislation that would require that future CIA directors and deputy directors be chosen from among career civilian or military intelligence personnel.

The legislation would prevent political appointments such as those of Bush and Casey, who was Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign chairman. Both Goldwater and Moynihan said their proposal would not apply to Casey, who has been told by Reagan that he is welcome to stay as CIA director if the president is reelected.

Goldwater said in an interview two weeks ago that even though he supports Casey and believes he is doing a good job, he does not feel that someone from the political ranks should fill the post in the future.

Last spring, Goldwater became upset with Casey when he felt that Casey was not keeping the Senate intelligence committee sufficiently informed about CIA support for

the mining of some Nicaraguan harbors. In an April 9 letter, Goldwater told Casey, "It gets down to one, little, simple phrase: I am pissed off!"

Two weeks ago, Goldwater said Casey is "a goddamned lovable old bastard who is shrewd and has been fantastically successful" in rebuilding the agency. Goldwater said he blames the CIA's problems more on the congressional investigations of the agency in 1975-76 than on any other single factor, including the Carter administration.

Moynihan said in an interview yesterday that after eight years on the committee, he and Goldwater "feel there is no place for partisan politics in the intelligence community . . . and the legislation is our statement and judgment of the case."

On Reagan's comments about an alleged intelligence failure in the previous administration, one current intelligence official said, "It's really a bum rap that Turner did something that hurt the agency this way." CIA personnel figures during Turner's tenure show that 820 positions were eliminated from the operations branch over two years; 17 were fired, another 154 were asked to retire one or two years early, and 649 positions were lost because of attrition.

"This was exactly the kind of getting the bureaucrats to throw their briefcases in the Potomac that Ronald Reagan advocates," the official said. Several other officials said that the Vietnam war buildup had created a bloated bureaucracy at CIA headquarters and that agents and CIA personnel abroad were being overmanaged.

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Moynihan also released a letter from Casey, written six months ago and dated March 8, confirming that the intelligence budget buildup began during the Carter administration.

Casey wrote, "All of us know that the increase in the personnel and budgetary strength of the agency began in 1979, that it was planned and proposed earlier and that it cannot be completed without strong bipartisan support."

In the one-page letter to Moynihan, Casey three times decried any use of the CIA or its revitalization for "partisan political purposes."

"You have my assurance," Casey said, "that I will not tolerate any attempt to politicize the agency or its work, or use the fact of its revitalization for partisan political purposes."

A CIA spokesman said yesterday that Casey would have no comment on the current controversy.

Turner said the elimination of the 820 CIA positions probably helped intelligence-gathering because layers of bureaucracy were cut. There was public criticism for these personnel cuts at the time, he said, because some of the individuals went public. In addition, Turner has said previously that the two-sentence letters that notified those who had lost their jobs were sent out by his deputy. Turner contended that he had drafted a two-page personal letter to each one, but was talked out of sending it. He has characterized this as "the biggest mistake I made" at the CIA.

In defending the Carter-Turner intelligence record, intelligence officials said that as an example, the CIA station in El Salvador was closed down in 1973 to save money and because of a general lack of interest in Latin America because Cuba had turned its efforts toward dealing with domestic problems.

The station was reopened in 1978, during the Carter administration, these officials said.

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